

'Tis the Season for the Average Midwestern Golfer

By Patrick J. Norton, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Golf Course



The average midwestern golfer is simply looking for value. Wise and intelligent golf course operators accept and understand this concept...and cater to it. Arrogant and all knowing course developers who were riding high a few short years ago are starting to choke on their inability to understand this same concept. Midwestern American golfers do want golfing value.

What amazes me about upscale public golf courses is the sheer number of them that have been built in the last ten years and the prices that they need to charge in order to be in business! American midwestern golfers have been paying these prices...but now that times are tough...they are paying them no more. Lots of information is out there about high end courses that are suffering acutely...suffering from their overestimation of how much people will continually pay for golf.

Why weren't these people developing somewhat lesser golf courses that would be just as enjoyable for the masses of golfers, like me, who have only so much disposable income to spend on an already expensive sport? Didn't these guys listen during Economics 101 when supply and demand were explained over and over again?

Average golfers simply cannot handle such difficult and expensive golf courses...yet over and over again ChicagoLand Golf would be touting the latest and greatest golf course opening. Granted...there were a few smart operators who developed new golf courses for \$3,000,000 or less...and I'll bet that they're doing just fine as golf tightens up.

There should be no sympathy given to those who had their opportunities to help the game that we all love so much...but instead have reinforced the image that golf is indeed...a rich man's game.

I do not even care to discuss the latest and greatest golf course...because I know that the green fee is too expensive for most people... to pay to play on a regular basis. These courses are touted as 'must play'...which really means must play about once or twice...then search for a more affordable course to frequent!

On a lighter note, this is the time of the year when these same average midwestern golfers tend to get a little bit predictable.

Classic is their ability to continue to compliment the golf course superintendent on the 'primo' condition of the golf course...when in reality it's a matter of the golf course barely holding together through all sorts of weather! It's always humorous in a twisted way...the average golfer just loves what we offer here at this

average, moderately upscale public course...while the superintendent seems to be constantly riding on the edge of disaster...hoping and praying for some late summer relief.

August 2002 has been a blessing...both in terms of beautiful weather and a big turnaround in green fee revenue...after a summer that just kept on going and going. We were plagued with a relatively empty golf course from April through July...and lots of uncertainty as to the reasons. Everybody had a terribly wet spring...but June and July were sporadic...until we began marketing a reduced weekday green fee that didn't require a coupon or a foursome. In essence, we responded to the economic downturn by eliminating our old \$37 weekday fee and slashing it to \$24...and watch the golfers flock in here during the week!

After trying various remedies to boost our greens fee revenue...a simple price reduction did the trick! Our mutual feeling is that looking at the daily total revenue increases is well worth reducing our price...an adjustment called for in the present economy.

Although August has brought us cool weather perfect for healing up summertime stresses...it's still a little soon to say that this golf course is in great condition. Truthfully, I felt a keen sense of embarrassment today as I chopped my way around Nettle Creek participating in the annual F.O.E. (Fraternal Order of the Eagles) outing...of which I am a distinctly non-participatory type of member.

We've been, you see, in a strong golf operations cost control mode for this entire year...due to a very wet spring and a lackluster June and July...which truthfully

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Average golfers, however, don't know and don't need to know that my golf course panties are showing and that I feel slightly self conscious about all of the flaws that my six man Hispanic crew has no time to address!

So, as September beckons...'tis the season to tough it out as midwestern golfers everywhere start to gobble up the good rates, better weather, and hopefully excellent playing conditions. 'Tis the season also for fairway mower transaxle replacements, diesel engine overhauls, irrigation lightning strikes, MultiPro radiator replacements, '89 Silverado towing adventures, Saturday 5:30AM employee no shows...just a few examples of summertime happenings of which the average midwestern golfer is blissfully unaware!

Quite interesting also, is the lack of understanding or interest in golf course happenings on the part of the average midwestern golf course ownership duo! Should there be a bev cart gal inside taking too long a break, a

steak too well done, a railing unclean due to a bit of bird poop, or a restaurant customer ungreeted...there will soon be hell to pay!

But...roughs at six inches...fairways infested with disease, weeds, and insects... decade old mowers spewing hydraulic oil all over the greens...and ball marks so numerous that every green resembles a combat zone? No problema for the average midwestern superintendent and his small group of superhuman problem solvers!

Solve 'em quickly, too...because that's the weekly norm as the summer starts to draw to a close. Our owners, bless their hearts, have always been much too concerned with 'front end' problemitas (little problems)...which they tend to micromanage just a bit too much.

Put up with the concerns...solve the problems...and through all of the many sides of summer...improve the golf course. Autumn is about to start... which means that the grass starts to heal nicely...as does the soul of the superintendent as he surveys a more beautiful golf course with each passing autumnal week.

Let the average midwestern golfer have his day...and his season. Let him enjoy our damaged, suffering golf courses...as we apply further first aid in an attempt to survive another season. Our season is yet to come. ♻

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June Meeting held at The Golf Club At Camelot

By **Mike Lyons**, Golf Course Superintendent, Old Hickory Country Club



There was an outstanding turnout for the June meeting. Pat Zurawski host superintendent and his staff had the course in great shape. There were seventy-six attendees who enjoyed a nice lunch and conversation before heading out on to the golf course.

The event was a blind partner with handicaps.

1st place with a score of 137 was the team of Dan Shaw and Scott Allsup; 2nd place, also with a score of 137, went to Seth Brogren and Pat Zurawski. 3rd place went to Jim Hasz and Don Shaffer; 4th place, Bruce Worzella and Robert Gosewhr; 5th place, J.D. Huseboe and Larry Lennert; 6th, place Danny Quast and David Oberle. 10th, place Jon Truttman and Cubby O' Brien. 13th place, Conrad Stynchula and John Jorgensen. 22nd place, Brian Schmidt and Christine Faulk and last but not least the team of Dennis Dary and Kristen Rosonke finishing in last place.

Hole prize winners were: Shortest Drive, Duane Lange. Longest Drive, Bruce Worzella. Closest in three, Joe Kuta. Closest in two, Dewey Laak and closest to the pin, Scott Bushman.

A special thank you to John



Roy Zehren and host Pat Zurawski. Camelot was the farm of Adolf Zehren, Ray's grandfather, before it was turned into a golf course. As a child he spent summers here on the farm; these days he spends time on the same land, on the golf course! Small world!

Jorgensen from EZ GO for donating some very nice raffle items. The raffle raised \$225.00 for the O.J. Noer Foundation. Thank you very much John and everyone

who took part in the raffle.

Again, thank you Lee Merkel, Pat and the entire staff at Camelot G.C. I know everyone enjoyed your golf course and hospitality. 🌿

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Sam and Katie Zurawski were on hand to check on the golf course for their dad, Pat.



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WGCSA Meeting - Wisconsin River Golf Club



By **Dustin Riley**, Golf Course Superintendent, Oconomowoc Golf Club

The Golf Course - Wisconsin River Golf Club

The Wisconsin River Golf Club is a public 18-hole golf course located in central Wisconsin's Stevens Point. The golf course opened in 1961 displaying its front 9 labeled the "River 9" holes, which were designed in 1959. Ten years later, the back 9 titled the "Road 9" completed the layout. During the mid 1990's, golf course architect Larry Roberts performed improvements.

In January of 2001, Bill Stupar purchased the Wisconsin River Golf Club. Bill holds the positions of Owner, Club Manager, Golf Professional and is the WSGA Representative. The 150 members and the daily fees total nearly 25,000 annual golf rounds. The bentgrass greens and bluegrass fairways provide the playing surface for a challenging golf course hidden amongst the outskirts of Stevens Point.

The Golf Course Superintendent - Tod Blankenship

Tod Blankenship arrived at the Wisconsin River Golf Club in 2001. Tod graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Madison in the fall of 1999 with a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture with the Turfgrass and Grounds Specialization. Following graduation, Tod proceeded to upstate New York to assume the assistant superintendent position at the private golf course, Skaneateles Country Club. One year later, Tod assumed the golf course superintendent role at the Wisconsin River Golf Club in his quest to return to Wisconsin.

The Event

WGCSA members, affiliates and guests traveled to the center of the state to gather at the Wisconsin River Golf Club on July 15, 2002. June and July have caused Wisconsin to withstand a barrage of harsh weather. Southern Wisconsin counties have suffered high temperatures and drought-like conditions, while the western and central counties have had to endure several intensive rainfalls. Unfortunately, the Wisconsin River Golf Club had suffered from some of these severe storms. Although located in the "Central Sands" of Wisconsin, the golf course could not handle the nearly 10 inches of rain that Mother Nature would deliver two weeks prior to the event. That large amount of rain, coupled with upper 80 to 90 degree days, obviously created a golf course superintendent nightmare.

The severe weather from the prior weeks could not

discourage Tod Blankenship, as he smiled and welcomed everyone to the golf club and a wonderful day of golf. As groups took the golf course it quickly became evident of nature's cruelty, as well as the turf's inability to do the impossible. However, the damages from the storms were overshadowed by the extensive and intensive repair efforts made by Tod and his maintenance crew of 15.

Although I have only been a golf course superintendent for a short time, I will always be amazed by fellow superintendent dedication. Many superintendents refer to 80-90 hour workweeks as a job requirement, responsibility or passion. Most people would label a superintendent's passion as insanity. Nevertheless, when a golf course superintendent hosts an event for his/her peers, you can bet every attempt will be made to overcome all obstacles, including Mother Nature. Those efforts were definitely realized by those who played on July 15th. Thank you Bill, Tod and the entire Wisconsin River Golf Club staff. All those in attendance truly enjoyed a wonderful event.

The Awards

#1 Longest Putt	Gene Hogden Ettrick Golf Club
#6 Closest to pin	Charles Schenk Blackhawk CC
#8 Longest Drive	Troy Jasta Wisconsin River Golf Club
#12 Closest to Pin	Layne Anderson Ettrick Golf Club
#15 Longest Putt	Brad Wagner Foxboro Golf Club
#17 Closest to Pin	Steve Blake Crystal Springs Country Club

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#18 Longest Putt	John Krutilla Janesville Country Club
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May Meeting – Country Club of Wisconsin Super-Pro Tournament

By **Dustin Riley**, Golf Course Superintendent, Oconomowoc Golf Club

Golf course superintendents and PGA club professionals traveled to Grafton on May 29th to participate together in the Super-Pro Tournament held at the Country Club of Wisconsin. The Country Club of Wisconsin, along with the event sponsor Club Car, hosted a great turnout and beautiful day of golf. Superintendent Gordon Waddington and Club Professional Bob Hibbitts overcame wet, cool spring weather to provide excellent playing conditions as well as a wonderful, relaxing atmosphere. Pat Jones, editor of *Golfdom Magazine*, was this year's guest speaker. Pat's discussion focused on improving the relationship between golf course superintendents and club professionals.

Pat was able to provide several examples of superintendent/professional conflicts resulting in poor working relationships. Many of those in attendance agreed that their superintendent/professional working relationship could, at times, become stressed and unproductive. The goal of both the golf course super-

intendent and club professional should be to provide the best product or service for their respective clientele, whether a private membership, daily fee or municipality. Common sense would suggest that a healthy super/pro relationship would provide an excellent golfing experience for members and guests. So how do we improve the super/pro relationship?

Pat stressed communication, the same communication skills that everyone utilizes when dealing with management, members or guests. It is very important to transfer those same communication efforts toward our fellow department head. Golf course superintendents should provide information concerning projects or golf course concerns. The club professional could then use that information to educate the golfer more accurately. And in turn, the club professional should inform the golf course superintendent when there are special requirements for golf outings, tee time alterations, etc. Although these suggestions were not new

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concepts, the efforts to repair or improve working relationships need to be exercised. Once the entire "team" is working for the same goal, the ability to satisfy our clientele becomes a bit easier.

The golf course superintendents and their respective club professionals paired together to attack the golf course in attempt to record the lowest score in a

Chapman Alternate Shot format. Those results are listed below. The day turned out to be wonderful playing weather. Hopefully, every group used the opportunity to apply Pat Jones suggestions to improve the ever-important superintendent/club professional working relationship. ♣

SUPER-PRO:

2002 SUPER-PRO CC OF WISCONSIN
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 Chapman Alternate Shot Div I Awards List - \$2,850.00 Fund Total

Place Name	Award	Score	Total		
1st Johnson Park GC	Charlie Brown	\$300.00	31.7	34.0	65.7
	John Feiner	300.00			
2nd North Shore GC	Glenn Fischer	250.00	31.9	34.0	65.9
	Scott Schaller	250.00			
3rd Olde Highlander GC	Jim Lombardo	200.00	36.5	33.0	69.5
	Riley Wulz	200.00			
4th NorthBrook CC	Fred Nadeau	170.00	34.0	35.6	69.6
	Tom Schaller	170.00			
5th Conway Farms GC	Jeff Mory	140.00	34.1	36.0	70.1
	Chad Ball	140.00			
6th North Hills CC	Eddie Terasa	115.00	34.3	36.0	70.3
	Randy DuPont	115.00			
7th Geneva National GC	Douglas Mortola	80.00	33.4	37.0	70.4
	Jeremy Amosson	80.00			
Quit Qui Oc GC	Todd E. Montaba	80.00	34.0	36.4	70.4
	Brian Feldmann	80.00			
9th Oconomowoc GC	Rob Elliott	50.00	36.0	35.5	71.5
	Dustin Riley	50.00			
10th Ozaukee CC	Chris Hicks	40.00	37.6	34.0	71.6
	Wayne Otto	40.00			

2002 SUPER-PRO CC OF WISCONSIN
 Sponsored by CLUB CAR
 Chapman Alternate Shot Div II Awards List - \$750.00 Fund Total

Place Name	Award	Score	Total		
1st Old Hickory CC	Steve Kaiser	\$175.00	33.5	33.0	66.5
	Mike Lyons	175.00			
2nd Oshkosh CC	Curt Larson	125.00	32.0	37.9	69.9
	Carston Larson	125.00			
3rd Club Car	Steve Fischer	75.00	37.0	35.0	72.0
	Doug Turner	75.00			

2002 SUPER-PRO CC OF WISCONSIN
 Sponsored by CLUB CAR
 Overall Final Results

USGA

SOME LIKE IT HOT

By Bob Vavrek, USGA Agronomist, North-Central Region

However, I doubt there are any superintendents from the North-Central Region in that group. So far, the story of the summer has been the extended periods of hot, humid weather and the inconsistent rainfall. Temperatures well into the 90's that peaked out at least once at 100 degrees along with warm humid nights provided ideal conditions for intense disease activity. Throw a 3 or 4-inch rain and a windstorm into the pot every 6 weeks or so just to make things more difficult.

It has been a season of extremes. Cool days, cold nights and hard frosts were common occurrences well into May. These conditions persisted into early June at courses in the northern portions of the Region. On a positive note, green speed was not much of an issue until mid-June because topgrowth was set back by the cold air and soil temperatures. Weeds, however, had

little competition from slowly growing turf. Clover could be found just about everywhere - roughs, fairways, tees, and collars. Attempts to control clover during the cool/cold weather rarely produced the desired result. Once the hot weather arrived, a bumper crop of crabgrass became well entrenched in thin areas of turf across the course.

Older courses where the playing surfaces are dominated by *Poa annua* have suffered the most from the drought and heat. *Poa* had an opportunity to develop a deep, healthy root system during long stretches of unusually cool weather in April and May. Roots died back, though, when the weather pattern did a rapid 180 degree turn during mid-June.

By July, it rarely took more than a day to find out where a sprinkler had malfunctioned. The patch of



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